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TO THE CITIZENS

OF THE

Eighth Congressional District of North Carolina.

GENTLEMEN: At such a time as the present, when revolution is sweeping over the land, and the greatest, most free, and with all its imperfections, best government on earth, is reeling like a drunken man, I feel that there is no apology necessary for my troubling you with a letter. Indeed, from the vast number of letters that pour in upon me from all parts of our district, burdened with the anxious inquiry, "Watchman what of the night?" I should judge that you had expected a communication from me long before, concerning my stewardship and the alarming state of our beloved country. Therefore, without further exordium, I address myself to the task of giving you such information as to passing events, and such opinions concerning the future, as my position here enables me to obtain.

When I arrived here in December, and surveyed the rising storm that raged around the pillars of the Government, threatening to bury it beneath its waves, I found that the peace and perpetuity of the country was endangered by at least three parties. In that part of the South, which we have been accustomed to call "extreme," was seen a considerable element really desirous of dissolving the Union, terms or no terms; and which gladly seized upon the election of Lincoln as the *occasion*, rather than the cause for breaking up the Union. The frank confessions of prominent politicians in the South Carolina convention that they had been laboring for disunion for thirty years confirms this fact. Inflamed with magnificent and visionary conceptions of a great Southern Republic, the dominant ideas of which were cotton monopoly and slavery, free trade and free navigation, and as a necessary corrollary, direct taxation; and which was to conquer and annex all the countries seated on the basin of the Gulf of Mexico, making it but an inland sea, the key to which, Cuba, was in time, also to be acquired; they have long regarded the restraints of the Union as a curse, and have labored insidiously and incessantly to throw them off. This restive element, at first small and insignificant, has for many years been gathering head, until it has now become the most noisy, if not the major faction in all of the Gulf States.

Another party, dangerous to the permanancy of the government, was the rabid abolition element of the North, principally confined to New England; of the Wendell Phillips, Beacher, and Garrison order, represented in Congress by such fanatics as Lovejoy, Sumner, and a few others. This faction neither was nor is large, but in obedience to the general law, which governs small and insignificant bodies, makes more noise than almost any other two parties in the land. It has been especially useful to the *per se* disunion element of the South; its vile and slanderous abuse of our institutions and society being taken as a sample of the entire North, and furnishing the glowing theme for inflammatory appeals to our people against any union with such despicable wretches. This faction, too, has been working side by side with southern disunionists for the destruction of the Union, though for different reasons: the one because it protected slavery at all, the other because it did not protect it enough. Both alike rejoice in the prospect of disunion; in the seceding States bells are rung, cannot fire, and cities illuminated at getting rid of what they term "an accursed Union;" in Boston the rabid Phillips opens a harangue to a motley crowd of abolitionists, strong-minded women, and free negroes with the words, "All hail disunion!"

The third party, which I regarded as dangerous to the Union, was the vast Republican party of the North, of which you have heard so much. It was founded upon the sole issue of hostility to slavery, both in the Territories and everywhere else; and, of course, though they profess great devotion to the Union, any party that is sectional and lives by making war upon the institutions of another section, cannot but be practically hostile to that Union. And though they deny in the most emphatic terms any right or intention to interfere with slavery in the States where it exists, I regard their denial rather an evidence of dis-integration than of the falsity of the charge. For, strip of their deep and deadly hostility to slavery, they must fall to pieces for want of distinctive party features.

In opposition to these dangerous and sectional parties, there was a large conservative element in Congress representing a still larger constituency at home, which though duly regardful of the dangers that threatened the rights of the southern people and the perpetuity of the Government, saw as they thought sufficient safeguards and remedies in the checks and balances of the Constitution. When I left home in November last, the opinion was popular with the vast majority of our people, that we could afford to await the developments of Mr. Lincoln's policy; that his mere election was not of itself sufficient cause for resistance; though all agreeing, of course, in a prompt attempt at redress should he violate any acknowledged right. In fact this was the position taken by all parties in our State in the late Presidential campaign. But circumstances have since materially changed the force of that position.

At the opening of Congress, the parties opposed to Republicanism had control of the Executive, the Senate, the Supreme Court, and were so powerful in the House of Representatives that, by uniting their strength, the Republicans could have passed no obnoxious measure even through that body. In the next Congress, when Lincoln came into office, we should have had a clear majority in both Houses of twenty-nine votes. Congress and the Supreme Court both being friendly to the South, Lincoln would have been in *our* power completely, instead of the South being in *his*. Every petty officer in the land whose salary is worth a thousand dollars or upwards, has to be confirmed by the Senate; every dollar needed to carry on the Government, even the very salary which furnished the President his daily bread, must be appropriated by an anti-Lincoln House and Senate; and every law passed by Congress must be tested by a wise, learned, and anti-Lincoln Supreme Court, and if pronounced unconstitutional, no citizen was bound to obey it. These salutary and effectual checks upon rapacious majorities, were prepared by the wise foresight of our fathers to protect us against just such a state of things as the present. That they have been and would again prove completely effectual, history will not permit us to doubt. Less severe ones have served to keep even the kings of England in obsequious dependence on the people; for though Queen Victoria can to-day declare war against whomsoever she may please, yet if the *people* of England disapprove of it, their representatives in the House of Commons have only to refuse the money, and the war is not begun. Yet the impatient spirit or the willful determination of our southern brethren have hastily, rashly, and, I fear, ruinously fled from these strong defenses of the Constitution, and rushed into the wild and uncertain, perhaps bloody, issues of revolution. South Carolina led off the secession column, and six other States have followed her lead; thus abstracting fourteen Senators and thirty-three Representatives from Congress, and leaving us completely in the power of the Republicans in both branches! A more ruinous and suicidal policy, it seems to me, could not have been pursued, unless solidity and permanency in a Government be considered absolutely worthless and farcical.

Under these circumstances, forced upon us by the seceding States, I think both our safety and honor require that before we agree to stay in the Union and risk the policy of a Republican administration, we should demand and receive some additional guarantees, and I have shaped my course accordingly. But since the action of the seceding States, numbers of hitherto conservative men in the border and central slave States have caught the disunion fever and an attempt is made to change the issue again. The question is now rapidly assuming the form that it is better to go with the Cotton States, since they are determined to stay out, no matter what terms are offered us by the North. Numbers of them openly proclaim this, and many others not quite so bold, in effect proclaim it by asking such terms as our people at home have not demanded, and which reasonable men know will not be granted. Appeals are made to our sympathies and our manhood; we are asked if we had not

rather go with our southern friends and neighbors than to stay with our abolition enemies? will we *submit* to Lincoln? And we are incited to resistance by continual reference to the glorious struggles of our ancestors in the Revolution against British oppression, &c., &c. This question is upon you and you must decide it. You never have and perhaps never will live to decide upon one so vast and important in its consequences. Upon your vote a nation lives or dies. Certainly then you should examine it closely on both sides, and dismiss every prejudice, every thought of party, and all the smaller passions of men. If disunion is best, if it would afford you more liberty, prosperity, and happiness, then go for disunion and let no fond remembrance of past glories prevent you from sundering all the ties that bind you to Washington's handy work. But if you conceive, as I do, that it furnishes no remedy for any existing wrong or preventive for those in the future, that it will give no increased prosperity, will render us no safer, but will rather aggravate the evils of which we complain, then in the name of all that is reasonable, don't suffer yourselves to be *dragooned* out of a great and glorious government by the violence and desperation of political leaders who have refused to permit the people of their own States to pass upon their acts. Let us for a moment look at it.

No matter how much our likes and dislikes may rule the fleeting passions of the hour, nations are not founded and controlled by a sentiment merely. Self-interest controls the individual, and a nation is but an aggregation of individuals. And though we may regard it as but a sordid instinct, it is nevertheless a wise and sustaining one. It is therefore neither unnatural for us to hesitate and consider before we follow our southern neighbors, nor, considering the utter disregard to our wishes which they have exhibited is it unkind.

How, then, would disunion affect us of the border States?

Everybody knows that nineteen-twentieths of the fugitive slaves that the South loses escape from the border States—scarcely one from the cotton States. Kentucky loses \$100,000 worth per annum; Maryland, Virginia, and Missouri nearly as many. Now, under the operation of the fugitive slave law, part of them are recovered. But dissolve the Union, abolish that law and the Constitution in pursuance of which it was made, and how many would we recover? The reason that the northern abolitionists prevent the recapture of our slaves in so many cases, is because they slip them over into Canada, and get beyond our jurisdiction. If they stayed in the United States the marshal could at some time or other grab them. Now if all north of Mason and Dixon's line was converted by disunion into Canada, a foreign jurisdiction, the moment a negro stepped across that line he would be forever gone, for there is not a civilized nation on earth, so far as my knowledge extends, that returns fugitive slaves to their foreign masters. This would so deprecate negro property that they would begin to recede from the border; their masters, by sale or emigration, would move them South until, in a few short years, the great border States would become free. They then lose their interest in slavery and cease to be its advocates and supporters. Gradual emancipation next attacks it in North Carolina and Tennessee, that have in turn become border States, and so destruction marches southward. This, to me, seems obvious as the current of the Mississippi. No wonder Wendell Phillips and his fanatical crew shout "All hail, disunion!" There is a terrible significance in the cry. Then convert all the good and true men of the North, who have stood to us and our cause so long and so nobly, into aliens, acknowledging no longer any constitutional obligations or brotherly regard for us, and what restraint is there upon the furious and blood-thirsty fanaticism which led John Brown, bristling with arms, into a sleeping southern city? What mother within a hundred miles of that long and defenceless border could kiss her infant to sleep without the horrid thought that before the morning's sun her home might become the funeral pile of herself and child!

The burdens of a separate existence deserve also our consideration. The abuse of the taxing power constitutes oppression in any form of Government, and under all circumstances. The expenditure needed to carry on a Government, is said to be in inverse proportion to the number of its inhabitants; if this be true, and there can be no doubt of the fact, the first ten years, at least, of our existence, would be marked by a most grievous taxation. Thirty millions per annum is the lowest estimate made by the friends of disunion, of the sum necessary to keep us going. Our population, white and black, amounts to twelve millions, which would give us two dollars and fifty cents for every man, woman and child of all colors, in the South. According to the returns of the last Presidential election, there are thirteen hundred thousand

voters in the Southern States, which would give us a fraction over twenty-three dollars to every voter. A practical examination of this is found in the expenditures of South Carolina. Though she only went out of the Union in December last, her expenditures so far, for army items alone, runs up to about three million dollars. The deficiency in the cost of transporting her mails, over the receipts, heretofore borne by the general government, but which she has now to shoulder herself, amounts to one hundred and forty thousand dollars. Then, there are her diplomatic, consular and judicial departments to provide for, her ordinary civil expenditures and interest upon her public debt, &c., which must swell her annual expenditures to at least four million dollars. She has a white population of about 308,168, which gives near thirteen dollars per head; about 45,000 voters, which would give about eighty dollars per annum taxes on every voter in the State! How on earth can they stand it? To meet this enormous oppression, for it is nothing less, they begin with a tax of two dollars on the hundred of land, four times the average of our own land tax, for both State and county purposes, or about *nine times* greater than our State tax on land alone! Think of that, farmers of North Carolina, when you hear men talk flippantly, of a dissolution of the Union as a blessing greatly to be coveted.

Thirty millions per annum, mind you, only includes the *ordinary moving* amount for the new Government; but we must have a vast sum to get it started. A standing army must be raised, equipped, and maintained; a navy must be built and manned for the protection of our commerce; forts, arsenals, and dockyards are needed; a national capitol, and a hundred items too tedious to be enumerated, all indispensable to our separate nationality. To give you a slight idea of what these things cost, I will only say that our present capitol has cost us about ten millions, and is not yet finished; our army of about 18,000 effective men, costs us fifteen millions per annum, and our navy as much more; saying nothing of the first cost of our ships and their armaments. The total excess of expense over the receipts for carrying the mails in the southern States, is over three million and a half of dollars per annum, of itself a tremendous item.

There is, indeed, no telling what our *extraordinary* expenditures may amount to during the first year of our separate existence. War, which is most likely to ensue when we divide, may make it necessary for us to keep 100,000 men constantly in the field. The awful calamities of civil war in all its sad aspects, need not be dilated on; the mere mention is sufficient to set every imagination aglow with pictures of financial, commercial, agricultural, and social ruin.

Then comes up the question, What is to become of our vast public property—the immense territories of the West? Scarcely a nation on earth has so magnificent a public domain. Previous to the admission of Kansas, a few weeks ago, the unsettled Territories exceeded in dimensions, by several thousand square miles, the whole area of the thirty-three States. They are common property, and if we divide how are we to dispose of them? If we can divide them fairly and peaceably, why can that not be done without going out of the Union? They constitute the great bone of contention between North and South, and if the North refuses even so much as to allow us to take an even chance with them for their settlement by prohibiting us to go therewith our slave property, can we expect them to peaceably give up one-half to us absolutely? They certainly never will. Then we must either go to war for them or surrender our rights forever to the whole by going out of the Union. As we desire our fair share of them principally for the purpose of strengthening slavery, I consider New Mexico, the only one whose latitude is at all suitable to it, so little likely ever to become a slave State under any sort of tuition, that no sensible man would ever think of risking the calamities of war for such an object. And for us just to *retire* and leave the North absolute possession of this grand inheritance, is something I equally disapprove. If the territorial question is giving us trouble now, it would certainly give us infinitely more in the attempt to separate. The complications would multiply five fold.

But we are constantly told that we ought to divide because the people of the North and South hate each other; that their interests and pursuits are diverse; in short, that we are not homogeneous. While this involves a truth in one sense, the deduction is both false and unphilosophical. It is not necessary that we should love every man in the Government as a condition precedent to our living in the same country with them. A man does not like his next door neighbor, perhaps; may know him to be a villain even; yet they may both live, and live happily, under the same Government. Geographical position often compels communities to combine that otherwise might

well separate. The English, Irish, and Scotch do not like each other; and following their national antipathies, would be feeble, brawling second or third class communities; but united they become the first empire of the Christian era. The fragmentary States of Italy do not like each other, and centuries of petty discord have shamed their illustrious lineage. But, though slowly and with tears, they have learned a great lesson; and now, through carnage and blood, they are seeking *union*; whilst we, their great exemplars, through perhaps more and better blood, are seeking discord and division! Alas! I tremble to think that the nineteenth century may yet endorse in our fall, the obnoxious dogma of the tyrant, that man is not capable of self-government. There is not a purely homogeneous people on earth whose territory extends through two degrees of latitude. We seek a phantom when we wander from the beaten path of our fathers after it.

Paradoxical as it may sound to disunionists, those who read history and have candor enough to own their convictions, know that this great diversity of interests and pursuits constitutes really the most solid cement of national greatness. It is nothing more nor less than the *division of labor*, perhaps the greatest axiom of political economy. As well might a man say that a blacksmith, wheelwright, carpenter, shoemaker, farmer, and merchant, could not live and prosper in the same town, as to say that South Carolina, who grows cotton, could not live with Massachusetts, who spins it. True, they may differ about the protection the Government should extend them. South Carolina has a monopoly for her staple in the soil and climate; God has given her a protective tariff in the winds and rains. But cotton can be spun wherever there is water enough to turn a wheel, and Massachusetts, therefore, asks a tariff. Here is a difference; but surely, the good people of those communities should know that the difference could be mended by separation and war before they resort to it. In fact the illustrations of the benefits and blessings of this very diversity to our people are so plentiful and so obvious to the commonest understanding, that I will not consume time in enumerating them.

But we are told that unless nations expand they begin to die, and that we must have room for slavery to spread out or it perishes; and that, as the North refuses to let us enjoy the present Territories, we must separate and seek another outlet in order to preserve our domestic institution. I believe, with the exception of the territory reserved by solemn treaty to the Indians, it is agreed on all sides, that if a negro was "expanded" into any portion of our unsettled domain he would be more likely to starve with his silly master, than to flourish. Certainly there is none of it inviting to slavery, or where a slave is likely to be taken so long as there is a single acre to spare in the regions of cotton, sugar, and rice. And according to fair estimates, based upon experience, there are cotton lands alone enough in the South, yet in the woods or prairies, to employ one hundred million slaves. We have now only four millions! Certainly, with this fact in view, we have a reasonable time in which to repent of our sins before we die of suffocation. Though New Mexico might become a slave State, and thus strengthen the political status of the South, it certainly will never become profitable to slave labor if soil, climate, and productions furnish any indications. Then, if we must have more profitable slave regions, we must conquer or purchase them. Where shall we do it? Take in the mongrel, mix-blooded, cut-throat population of Mexico and Central America? The wisest and greatest of our Southern statesmen, from Mr. Calhoun down, have disapproved and argued against such a thing. But suppose we do it, how do we then proceed? There comes in here another interesting question.

The doctrine of secession is that under color of which the Union has been rent asunder, and the new Confederation of the South will of course recognize it palpably and beyond dispute. As soon as we join that confederacy suppose we are called on to furnish men and money for the conquest of some of the Mexican provinces on the Gulf, or perhaps merely money to purchase them. At a vast expense we acquire them, they are admitted into our Union and clothed with sovereignty, protected and elevated into an integral part of a great civilized nation, on *an equal footing* with the original States. After all this is done, the new States take offense at some law of the Congress and walk out of the Union! Nobody has any right to prevent them "from resuming their sovereignty" at any time, though they never had any sovereignty, as Florida and Louisiana. So of Cuba, Nicaragua, or any other country we might annex. In fact the whole concern, the old and the new States, would have no cement, no bond of Union, that might not be blown into atoms at any moment; and any general or central government would be a mere tenantat will, which

one of the owners might put off without even so much warning as a road hand is entitled to have before he can be compelled to work or pay the forfeiture! Who would want to live in such a government, or pretence of a government, as that would be? Who would take its bonds?

Again: If we once begin the division where will it stop? In all probability the first general smash would result in four pieces, certainly three. Already the Pacific States have proclaimed through their representatives here, their intention to set up for themselves in case of a dissolution, which they undoubtedly would do. The Northwest seriously threatens to do likewise; so does Texas; and even Utah glories in secession as affording prospects of a brilliant polygamic sovereignty on the banks of a new Jordan! These States formed, in addition to the ordinary sources of annoyance incident to neighborhood, there would be upon them that question of so terrible import that Europe turns pale at its mere mention, I mean the *balance of power*. This problem piled up the enormous figures of the British national debt, and has wet with blood every soil in Europe. And now none are louder in their warnings to us to avoid this rock, than English statesmen who know of what they speak.

These are a few, and but a few, of the dangers of separation, as they occur to me. It seems but the part of prudence to avoid them as long as possible. I can see nothing that we will gain by separation, and much that we will lose, and lose forever. We could get rid of high tariffs, it is true, but instead of them we would have an export duty upon everything we sold to foreign nations, which is the same, or direct taxation, which is infinitely worse. Our people could not, and would not, stand the payment in specie of such enormous taxes, especially a non-commercial people as ours are. As to the bright dreams of greatness and prosperity of a Southern Confederacy, I do not believe them anything more than dreams. No nation on earth ever got rich that did not manufacture, and manufactures cannot flourish without the protection of the government, either incidentally or otherwise. Entire free trade, which is the proposed policy of the cotton States, would destroy those we already have, and effectually prevent the springing up of others. We have no ships either, and with an entire repeal of the navigation laws, throwing our carrying open to the competition of the world, we never would have any. Our goods would forever be carried in foreign bottoms, and without ships there can be no national greatness. In the early struggles of our infant commerce, the navigation laws were wise and expedient, though they are now no longer needed, and should be repealed. But the new Confederation proposes to begin just where the old one should leave off, and seems to expect a navy to spring up against the world's competition, just because the South is determined to do nothing, for that the North has continued a policy, at first wise, longer than it need be. At all events, if both North and South could become so great and prosperous when separated, I see not why they cannot become infinitely greater and more prosperous by staying together. To this end I have concentrated all of my feeble efforts as your representative; feeling, indeed, that you did not send me here to pull down your government, but rather to preserve and perpetuate it. At the same time I would not, nor have I sacrificed or compromised any right which, as slaveholders and Southern men, you were entitled to, even for the sake of the Union. My opinion was, and still is, that if the remaining southern States would unitedly, firmly, and temperately demand such reasonable guarantees as our honor and safety requires, the North would grant them.

The nation has just come out of a heated and bitter Presidential contest, and it was hardly to be expected that the representatives of the various passions of the land, should sit down coolly and settle all their differences in a moment. Precipitancy and rash haste are certainly to be avoided in dealing with such momentous issues. I trust much to the healing effects of time, and the cool, good sense of the American people, which, when awakened, will surely not permit the South to ask too much, or the North to stubbornly refuse us justice. A few years at most, perhaps twelve months, will decide the status of New Mexico, which is the only territory the South pretends to claim as at all suitable to slavery, and then this vexed question will be forever put away from us. For should we acquire territory hereafter, most likely its status as to slavery will be fixed before it is admitted. At all events, let us go coolly and deliberately about the determination of our destiny. I deem it not only dangerous, but unworthy of the high and exalted conservatism of our State, to rush madly away from *our own government, and our own property*, at the bidding of the fiery spirits of our Southern sisters, who have for thirty years been denouncing it. We forget that there is one million majority of the American people opposed to Lincoln and

his policy, that fully half of this number are in the North, and there is both danger and disgrace in deserting our friends. By firmness and prudence on the part of the border States, we may not only procure justice and safety from the North, but in a little while, by kindness and persuasion, may succeed in bringing back the seceding States, like prodigal sons once more to our father's house. Would not it rejoice the spirits of our wise and heroic ancestors to see again this great family of nations gathered around the common hearthstone, and worshiping once more together at the shrine of liberty, which they set up in anguish and blood! Can we lose anything by this course?

What is it that we are trying to preserve? Do our people appreciate their country? Already a first class power in the earth, it has resources and elements of greatness sufficient to make it in a few generations, such an empire as the imagination of man never conceived. With a population of only thirty-one millions, it has a territory almost equal in square miles to the whole of Europe with three hundred million souls. Stretching across the continent from sea to sea, one single line of contemplated and partly finished railroad from New York to San Diego, would reach from Cape St. Vincent to the farthest point of the Ural mountains, the longest line that can be drawn on the map of Europe. Our sea coast amounts to thirty thousand miles, whilst fed by a thousand streams, our internal navigation is made to exceed that of any country on earth by the mightiest river that ever poured its silvery tribute to the sea, sweeping through the heart of the land. Our railroads, if spread out in one continuous line, would girdle the solid frame of the globe; our tonnage is among the greatest of the world, and our foreign trade reaches the enormous annual sum of six hundred million dollars. Our flag, bearing the emblems of our divisible unity, has floated triumphantly in every breeze under the whole heavens, from the zephyr of the spice islands under the Southern Cross, to the death winds of eternal ice where the gallant Kane left it. But above and better than all these material evidences of power, we are happy, prosperous, and free. The turmoils, the strife, and accidents of revolution *may find us a master.* For one, I protest against the rending of this magnificent temple of human liberty. I know we could never build a better, if we show not enough patriotism to preserve the present. I protest both against southern rashness and northern injustice. I protest against rudely waking our people from their dreams of peace to the deadly shock of arms, to the ruin and desolation of civil war. My highest aspiration is to be able to return home and say to those who sent me here that our troubles are honorably settled; the Union is still secure; plow your fields and sow your seeds with confidence, no licentious soldiery shall reap the harvest, but you and your children shall eat thereof, for peace is restored and law and order still prevail!

But with you, my friends, is the decision of these matters. Should all our anxious and sincere efforts to procure justice and maintain the blessings of peace prove finally vain and ineffectual, then your fate is mine. To you, my generous constituents, do I owe all, and to you will I repay it. A people that have so trusted, so honored me, are entitled to and shall have, if necessary, even my blood upon the battle field. Having resisted the tide of destruction as long as possible, it will nevertheless be the duty, as, I doubt not, it will be the pleasure, of Union men to show the foes of our State and section, should the dreadful necessity arise, that if slow to take the field, we are none the less resolute to maintain it.

You will perceive that I have confined my letter entirely to our present troubles in regard to the Union, thinking that you feel little interest in anything else at this time. There are many matters, of less consequence, I would like to speak of, but cannot without making my letter too long.

Very truly, your obedient servant and fellow-citizen,

Z. B. VANCE.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

Washington City, February 13th, 1861. .



